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A Father’s Lesson

The poem “Sign for My Father, Who Stressed the Bunt” is narrated by a son who is reflecting on the days when his father taught him to play baseball. While making many references to the game, the true meaning of the poem is beyond the baseball diamond. The poem describes a father giving his son signs throughout his baseball career. As the son grows up during his baseball career, he realizes the importance of the bunt. The connection between a coach giving a player signs and a father giving his son life lessons is the one of the major themes of the poem. “Sign for My Father, Who Stressed the Bunt” is a poem about baseball and the life lessons a father teaches his son.

The word “sign” in the title of the poem has the literal meaning of any object, action, event, or pattern that conveys a meaning. In baseball, a sign is shown by a coach or manager to signal the players to make the next move. A sign can be shown to a player to steal a base, throw a certain type of pitch, or walk a batter among many other actions. Many times in sports, a coach provides guidance to a player just as a father would to his son. Lessons in sports can often be connected to many of life’s lessons. Fairness, responsibility, and hard work are all taught while playing sports. Many fathers use sports as a way to spend quality time with their children and teach them some of these very powerful life lessons.

“Stressed” the “Bunt” in the poem’s title has multiple meanings, both in the context of the poem and connections to life outside baseball. A “stress” is emphasis, importance, or significance attached to a certain thing. In the context of the poem, the thing emphasized is the “bunt.” To bunt is to bat very gently so that it rolls into the infield close to home plate. In baseball, a bunt is often an act of sacrifice. The batter will often get thrown out after bunting the ball, but someone else will score a run for the team. The son enjoyed when his father taught him how to bunt, but the son still could not get the thought of hitting a home run off his mind. It is very a stylish and powerful feeling to hit a home run.

The son looks back on his father’s lesson by saying, “I never learned what you were laying down” (20). In baseball, the narrator never learned the importance of sacrificing himself by “laying down” a bunt. The narrator could connect the phrase to life by saying that as a child, he never learned all that his father sacrificed for him. Sacrifice is a major part of being a parent. It takes countless hours of time and effort to raise a child. Putting someone else’s interests before your own is a difficult thing to do. This is only one of the sacrifices a parent must make to raise a child.

The poem ends with the line “I’m getting a grip on the sacrifice” (23). The narrator, now that “years passed” (12), now understands the importance of the bunt. Laying down a bunt so that someone else can score is a huge play to make. It can be just as important to sacrifice for others as it is to achieve personal success. The narrator finally realizes the extent of time and effort that his father had to give him throughout the years. Despite how passionate his son was for hitting home runs, the father always stressed the bunt and the importance of sacrifice. It can be just as important to support others as it is to achieve personal success.

While the poem makes many references to baseball, the true meaning can be found in the sacrifices parents make for their children. As the son grows up during his baseball career, he realizes the importance of the bunt and sacrifice. The son thanks his father for all that was done for him when he was a child. “Sign for My Father, Who Stressed the Bunt” is a poem about baseball and the life lessons a father teaches his son.

Works Cited

Bottoms, David. “Sign for My Father, Who Stressed the Bunt.” Perrine's Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense. Ninth ed. Ed. Thomas R. Arp and Greg Johnson. Belmont, CA:

